

# A STUDY OF THE IT IS THAT-CONSTRUCTION AND THE NOT THAT-CONSTRUCTION

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A Study of the *It is that*-Construction and the *Not that*-Construction

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This study is an analysis of the *it is that*-construction and the *not that*-construction. Examples are shown in (1) and (2):

- (1) If there has been an explosion, *it's that* the workers have not taken the necessary precautions.
- (2) She ignored my suggestion –*not that* I care.

As Declerck (1992) claims, the *it is that*-construction is specificational because this construction represents a value in the *that*-clause for a variable in the preceding situation. The specificational *it is that*-construction, as Declerck among others points out, is inferential, since the variable is not lexicalized.

The semantic meaning of the inferential *it is that*-construction, which has not so far been argued, is characterized in terms of Peirce's (1940) abduction. The sentence in (3), for example, can be interpreted in two ways: the causal reading; and the inferential reading:

- (3) John smokes, because he has cigarettes in his house.

Let us apply the inferential reading to Peirce's abduction. The surprising fact that John has cigarettes in his house is observed. But if the hypothesis that John smokes were true, this fact would be a matter of course. Hence, there is reason to suspect that this hypothesis is true. The point is that in Peirce's abduction the inferential reading of (3) is drawn from effect to cause.

Another inferential reading is proposed by Hirose (1991):

- (4) The ground is wet, because it has rained.

In (4), the causal reading is preferred, but the inferential reading is given when the speaker does not know the actual state of the ground. In this case the inferential reading is drawn from cause to effect.

Thus, an inference is drawn either from effect to cause or from cause to effect.

In the *it is that*-construction, as in (5), the *that*-clause is an inferential conclusion drawn from the premise in the preceding situation:

- (5) He was shot in his house. *It is that* he knew too much.

Since an inference is drawn either from effect to cause or from cause to effect, the *that*-clause thus represents either a cause or an effect as an inferential conclusion.

The *not that*-construction is classified into two classes with respect to the relation between the preceding and the following contexts. Class I expressions, as in (2), function as a proviso not followed by any information related to it. Class II expressions are followed by this information as in (6):

- (6) It had taken him some time to realize this, at the beginning. *Not that* he was boastful or conceited, but he had been, in his early twenties, as ambitious as most other young men at such age.

Declerck (1992) claims that *not that*-sentences cannot be substituted for *it is not that*-sentences because the latter is specificational but the former is not, giving the following examples:

- (7) I shan't ever vote socialist after this. *Not that* I ever did.  
 (8) \*I shan't ever vote socialist after this. *It's not that* I ever did.

However there are cases in which this substitution is possible, as in (9):

- (9) Will you accompany me?—Well, *it's not that/not that* I wouldn't like to, but my wife is waiting for me.

This substitution is due to the fact that the *not that*-sentence is followed by an affirmative proposition, instead of the rejected inference in the *that*-clause which meets the constraint that a negative *it is not that*-sentence is followed by a correct value because the *it is that*-construction is specificational.